

## **Partnerships in Indian Health:**

Improving Access to Health Care for American Indian AHCCCS and KidsCare members

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### **Introduction**

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the state agency that administers the Arizona Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs, covers over 122,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). AI/AN represent about 5% of Arizona's total population, while AI/AN comprise about 10.5% of members enrolled in AHCCCS and KidsCare.

Although AHCCCS has the authority to mandate enrollment of AHCCCS and KidsCare members into one of the AHCCCS-contracted managed care plans; AHCCCS is not waived from federal Medicaid statutes prohibiting states from requiring American Indians to enroll in managed care. Accordingly, approximately 69% of AI/AN acute care members are enrolled in the AHCCCS American Indian Health Program (formerly known as IHS/AHCCCS), which is the acute care fee-for-service coverage option available to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The remaining 31% percent of American Indian and Alaska Native AHCCCS members are enrolled in an AHCCCS-contracted acute care health plan.

Similarly, the majority of American Indian elderly and physically disabled members eligible for the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) receive case management services through their respective tribe (if there is an intergovernmental agreement between the tribe and AHCCCS) or the Native American Community Health Center. The development and strengthening of key partnerships may lead to improvements in accessibility to quality health care by American Indian AHCCCS and KidsCare members. The following summaries are highlights of pertinent AHCCCS initiatives over the past several years.

### **AHCCCS Initiatives**

#### **Collaboration with I/T/U**

AHCCCS has fostered collaboration with the Indian health system, which is composed of the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal Health Programs (operated under P.L. 93-638), and Urban Indian Health Programs, and is commonly referred to as "I/T/U," in Arizona.

- Quarterly Meetings with IHS Area Directors – The AHCCCS Director and three IHS Area Directors in Arizona meet on a quarterly basis to identify new opportunities for collaboration in Indian health. Areas of discussion have included payment methodologies, electronic health information and technology, and policy/programmatic changes.
- Bi-Monthly Meetings with I/T/U Business Office Staff – The AHCCCS Division of Fee-for-Service Management (DFSM) holds bi-monthly meetings with business office staff to discuss claims issues and important policy/programmatic changes.
- Ongoing Training & Technical Assistance – The AHCCCS DFSM responds to requests from I/T/U for training and technical assistance on claim submission (including online billing), prior authorization, and provider registration.

#### **AHCCCS Tribal Consultation**

AHCCCS developed the AHCCCS Tribal Consultation Policy under the direction of Governor Napolitano through Executive Order 2006-14, "Consultation and Cooperation with Arizona Tribes." The AHCCCS Tribal Consultation Policy serves as a guide for AHCCCS' interaction with tribes on policy or programmatic changes that may have a significant impact on one or more tribes in the State of Arizona. Although incorporation of the AHCCCS Tribal Consultation Policy into the AHCCCS Administrative Policy did not occur until 2007, AHCCCS solicited feedback from tribes on various programmatic changes prior to the consultation policy's incorporation. For example, AHCCCS requested feedback from tribes on the implementation of mandatory provisions under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 which required

documentation for citizenship and identity for members and applicants in July of 2006. Since then, AHCCCS has sought feedback from tribes on the following topics:

- IHS/AHCCCS Name Change
- KidsCare Outreach
- Acute Care RFP Process
- General Feedback at the AHCCCS/ADHS/ADES Tri-Agency Tribal Consultation Session
- Various Programmatic and Policy Changes in Accordance with Legislation Enacted
- American Indian Health Program (AIHP) Referral Policy Change
- Fee-for-Service Rate Reduction for Certain Services

A report on actions taken as a result of the AHCCCS Tribal Consultation Policy is provided to the Governor's Office and tribal leaders in Arizona on an annual basis. The AHCCCS Tribal Consultation Policy has also undergone annual review as required by E.O. 2006-14.

### **Monthly Tribal Webconferences**

AHCCCS hosts monthly webconferences for tribes on a variety of AHCCCS programs and topics. Previous topics have included: ALTCS, KidsCare, AIHP, Electronic Health Information Initiatives, Health-e Arizona, Medicare Cost Savings Programs, and important program updates.

### **American Indian Health Initiative**

The AHCCCS Strategic Plan is a five-year plan designed to address (1) health care costs, (2) health care quality, (3) the uninsured, and, (4) organizational capacity. The AHCCCS Strategic Plan contains two population-specific initiatives, including, "Responding to a Growing Aging Population," and "American Indian Health Care." The population initiative on American Indian Health Care, also referred to as the "American Indian Health Initiative" is monitored and implemented by an internal American Indian Health Initiative Workgroup. The primary goals of the American Indian Health Initiative are to:

- Improve American Indian health status within state/federal policy and guidelines
- Expand dialogue, partnerships, and collaboration with Indian Health Service, tribally-operated 638 programs, and urban Indian health programs (I/T/Us)
- Ensure correct reimbursement to IHS/638 facilities through appropriate billing for covered services, resulting in expanded, enhanced, and improved services
- Provide ongoing, meaningful tribal consultation on policy and programmatic changes that may affect tribes in Arizona

An American Indian Health Initiative Workshop is also held on a bi-monthly basis to foster dialogue among the American Indian health provider community on important policy issues affecting American Indian AHCCCS and KidsCare members.

### **Additional Resources**

Various I/T/U facilities statewide are subscribed to the *Health-e Arizona* web-based application to better enable patient benefit coordinators who assist American Indian clients in applying for Medicaid, KidsCare, Cash Assistance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. AHCCCS continues to provide demonstrations of *Health-e Arizona* to interested health care programs that primarily serve the American Indian community.

The Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA), as a former KidsCare Outreach partner, developed culturally-competent informational materials about the KidsCare program. These materials were made available by ITCA to the tribes statewide.

An American Indian Health portal is included on the AHCCCS website at [www.azahcccs.gov](http://www.azahcccs.gov). Pertinent information for American Indian applicants, American Indian members, health care providers serving the American Indian community, and tribes is available on the portal.